

THE CITY OF CARPINTERIA'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

(Mrs. CAPPS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the city of Carpinteria.

Incorporated on September 28, 1965, the city of Carpinteria is home to over 13,000 residents on the central coast of California. It is known as one of America's finest small towns, and Carpinteria has also been recognized as one of the American cities with the highest quality of life.

The city of Carpinteria is a leader in environmental stewardship, working to protect California's precious coastline. In fact, Carpinteria City Beach has been recognized as the world's safest beach. Their local economy has thrived with its vibrant cultural history, and this unique agricultural region is home to California's famed avocado festival.

I am proud to honor the city of Carpinteria on their 50th anniversary. It is a key treasure on the central coast.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, September 25, 2015.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on September 25, 2015 at 5:12 p.m.:

That the Senate passed S. 2082.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 3 p.m. today.

Accordingly (at 2 o'clock and 7 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1500

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON) at 3 o'clock p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings

today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

PROTECTING AFFORDABLE COVERAGE FOR EMPLOYEES ACT

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 1624) to amend title I of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and title XXVII of the Public Health Service Act to revise the definition of small employer, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 1624

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Protecting Affordable Coverage for Employees Act".

SEC. 2. REVISION OF DEFINITION OF SMALL EMPLOYER UNDER HEALTH INSURANCE MARKET PROVISIONS.

(a) PPACA AMENDMENTS.—Section 1304(b) of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (42 U.S.C. 18024(b)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking "101" and inserting "51";

(2) in paragraph (2), by striking "100" and inserting "50"; and

(3) by amending paragraph (3) to read as follows:

"(3) STATE OPTION TO EXTEND DEFINITION OF SMALL EMPLOYER.—Notwithstanding paragraphs (1) and (2), nothing in this section shall prevent a State from applying this subsection by treating as a small employer, with respect to a calendar year and a plan year, an employer who employed an average of at least 1 but not more than 100 employees on business days during the preceding calendar year and who employs at least 1 employee on the first day of the plan year."

(b) PHSA AMENDMENTS.—Section 2791(e) of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 300gg-91(e)) is amended—

(1) in paragraph (2), by striking "101" and inserting "51";

(2) in paragraph (4), by striking "100" and inserting "50"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(7) STATE OPTION TO EXTEND DEFINITION OF SMALL EMPLOYER.—Notwithstanding paragraphs (2) and (4), nothing in this section shall prevent a State from applying this subsection by treating as a small employer, with respect to a calendar year and a plan year, an employer who employed an average of at least 1 but not more than 100 employees on business days during the preceding calendar year and who employs at least 1 employee on the first day of the plan year."

(c) DEPOSIT OF SAVINGS INTO MEDICARE IMPROVEMENT FUND.—Section 1898(b)(1) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1395iii(b)(1)) is amended by striking "\$0" and inserting "\$205,000,000".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PITTS) and the gentleman from California (Mr. CÁRDENAS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may

have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and insert extraneous materials in the RECORD on H.R. 1624.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Pennsylvania?

There was no objection.

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

The bipartisan bill before us today is a much-needed fix for small-business owners and employees struggling to comply with the healthcare law. H.R. 1624 is a bill to amend the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and the Public Health Service Act to revise the definition of small employer. The bill would allow the States to continue defining the small group health insurance market as employers with 1 to 50 employees.

Section 1304 of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act changed the Federal definition of the small group market to include employers with 1 to 100 employees. The States, however, have been allowed to continue defining the small group market as employers with 1 to 50 employees until January 1, 2016.

But beginning on or after January 1, 2016, plans sold or renewed for employers with 51 to 100 employees will be subject to the various small group health plan regulations established by PPACA. These more restrictive rating rules will increase health insurance premiums for these employers and reduce flexibility in benefit design.

The new requirements could also lead some employers with 51 to 100 employees to self-insure to avoid higher premiums. If that happens, this could result in adverse selection in the small group pool and higher premiums for employers with 1 to 50 employees.

Unless this current law is reversed, the disruption in the marketplace will be significant. For example, it is estimated that, under current law, more than 3 million employees will experience a double-digit percent increase in their healthcare premiums.

Ultimately, cost increases for small employers will change their choices regarding offering coverage, could change their business model, and will ultimately be felt by millions of workers.

Because the impact of current law will vary by State, defining the small group market should be left to the States, which is a policy envisioned in H.R. 1624.

I am pleased to say there is considerable support for this legislation in the House and the Senate.

The flexibility that would be given to States with immediate passage of H.R. 1624 would help ensure stable, small group health insurance markets that reflect the unique characteristics in each of the States.

If Congress passes H.R. 1624, premiums will be lower and allow millions of employees and employers to keep the plan they have and like. This is a